

ALL THE MONEY IN THE WORLD

Continued from page 4



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the possession of Red Head, never occurred to them.

I waited for school to let out, heavy with the fear that at the last moment Red Head would say, "You may all go—except Paulie."

But the dispersing bell rang; we grabbed our hats and books and dived for the door; and no detaining voice reached me. I will admit that it must have been an unusually loud voice that could have stopped me. I made all the noise that I could as I went out, with the idea that if Red Head really called me I could say next day:

"I didn't hear you, Miss Anderson. The boys was makin' such a noise!" I had tried that, and it had done fairly well on occasions.

So I hastened out of the schoolyard, at the head of a sycophantic band of followers, serene in the belief that Red Head had forgotten to punish me for my indiscretions, and that she considered it a perfectly natural affair for me to be going around with a pocketful of nickels. Alas! Little did I know the revenge she was planning!

AS I say, I was the worshiped of the sycophants. I had never been more than ordinarily popular with my fellows; but this afternoon I was the beloved of all. Tom Cuniff, who was two classes ahead of me, and thirteen or fourteen, fairly devoured me with his attentions. The only previous time that Tom Cuniff had ever noticed me, so far as I could recall, was once when I refused to shag a ball for him and he boxed me on the ear and pushed me into a mud puddle. But here was Tom Cuniff walking familiarly at my side, and, when others tried to crowd me a little, saying with a growl:

"Here, you kids stop shovin' Paulie! Him and me's friends. We're goin' somewhere, ain't we, Paulie?"

"Y-yes," said I, wondering where it was, but imagining (and quite right I was too) that it was One Arm Jake's.

Along the way Tom discoursed on several topics, interrupting me only by his task of chasing the rest of the boys away from me. Once we had to run a little, because Archie Howland and George Breitenstein, outraged at being deprived of the pleasure of renewing their earlier companionship with me and my wealth, fired rocks at us from a distance. But Tom protected me. He wouldn't see a hair of my head hurt, he said.

"Ver a good little feller, Paulie," he told me. "You bet you are! The finest little feller I know! Say, have ye seen them ten-cent bats down to One Arm Jake's? Don't ye want to buy one o' them?"

"I—I guess so," said I. I had not thought of it till then; but somehow Tom convinced me that I wanted a ten-cent bat more than anything else in the world. Also a reg'lar baseball, the cover sewed in two pieces, and a scorecard, and—well, whatever happened to suggest itself to the fertile mind of Tom Cuniff.

When we reached One Arm Jake's it was Tom Cuniff's strong arm that held open the screen door for me to enter. It was Tom Cuniff who glowered upon the impassioned throng without and forbade their entering after me.

"Can't ye let Paulie alone?" he demanded. "D'ye think he's goin' ter spend all his money on youse kids? Leave him be, or—"

A threatening swing of his arm made them fall back terrified; but they could not be driven away from the door, against which they pushed one another, sending comment in upon us.

"Aw, who wants to come in? He ain't got no money, anyway! Wait till we ketch him alone! Don't ye buy him nothin', Paulie. Say, Paulie, don't ye remember the time I let ye use my sled when yourn was broke? Hey, Paulie, don't be stingy!"

In the face of so much flattery and threats I was like a reed in the March wind. I knew not what to do, whither to turn. I was full of the desire to treat all alike; but Tom Cuniff would not have it so.

ONE ARM JAKE looked with disfavor on the presence of Mr. Cuniff in his shop. Tom was notoriously not a large purchaser, and Jake did not expect that now he had any money. But when he looked over the counter and saw that I was with him, he melted.

"Hello, Paulie," he said. "Back again?"

"Yes, Sir," said I, "an'—"

"An' he wants a ten-cent bat, an' a ball, an' a scorecard—an' how much are them pistols in the winder? An' gimme—I mean Paulie—a nickel novel about Deadwood Dick. Oh, they're fine, them Deadwood Dick novels, Paulie! Ain't you never read none o' them? An' what else do you want, Paulie? There! ain't them fine?"

As One Arm Jake, at the behest of Tom Cuniff, selected the various articles, they were passed over to me, and my arms were full. But I was clever—aha! clever! I was not to be caught insolvent, and, as each thing became mine I paid for it before I took another. I knew the moment must come when my wealth would be dissolved, when its purchasing power would cease, when the last nickel would have been fished up from my pockets! And yet—and yet—though I bought and bought and bought, the store of coins did not seem to diminish with astonishing speed. I still found, as I paid for a jack-knife that cost the huge sum of fifteen cents, that I had millions of nickels and other coins left.

Tom Cuniff regarded me, loaded like Santa Claus, with a satisfied smile. Then he said, "My goodness, Paulie! but you can't carry all them things! Don't you want me to carry some o' them? The bat an' the ball? Course I don't mind carryin' them fer a good feller like youse. An', say, if I carry some o' 'em, will you lend 'em to me?"

"You—you can have 'em all!" I exclaimed in a mad burst of generosity. "I got plenty more money, ain't I, Mr. Jake? Go on, Tom, you keep 'em. Mr. Jake, gimme another bat, an' another ball, an' another—another—all them things. An' kin I have a dagger, an' five pieces o' molasses hunk? Don't you like candy, Tom?"

Oh, yes, Tom liked candy, and, warming up to my offer, he selected his favorite compositions from the showcase, and stuffed them into his pockets. Then we went out of the store again, and were met by the expectant rabble.

"Oh, lookit! Oh, Paulie, leave me try yer bat?" It was grabbed from my arms, and with it an impromptu game of three old cat was going on in the middle of the street before I had time to realize that I was robbed.

But Tom flew to the rescue and restored my property to me, though not without some little trouble.

"Come on, Paulie," said Tom Cuniff. "Let's go somewhere an' have a good time."

"Where?" said I.

"Down the swamp," whispered he.

I blanched. I had been taught to dread that place called the swamp as I would dread a fever haunted district. It was over behind the factories, and the employees of the chocolate mills lived there. It was a disreputable neighborhood, the horror of mothers.

With the vision already forming in my mind of an angry maternal parent awaiting my tardy homecoming, I declined to go with Tom; whereupon, shouldering the bat I had "lent" him, and tucking the ball into his pocket, he said nonchalantly:

"All right, then, I don't care," and left me. I stood deserted by my false friend!

BUT I was not deserted for long. The rest of my acquaintances, seeing that the ogre had left me, now flocked to my side, and I was once more the center of a fawning flock. I welcomed the return of those with whom I was more familiar. In Tom's company I had seemed like a lesser quantity; but now the masterfulness of wealth came back to me, and I assumed the directorship again.

However, when One Arm Jake's was mentioned, I declined. Somehow, on my second trip there, I had imagined that I noticed a suspicious look in that merchant's eyes, and it began to dawn on me that perhaps he was wondering where I got all my money. I would not take any chances. Furthermore, had I not bought all the stock of his store? I could remember nothing more.

But we went to the drugstore, where I emptied a jar of rock candy of its crystalline sweetness, and made Danny Draper, the clerk, gape open eyed by ordering vanilla soda for all hands.

We next visited Henry Davis, the grocer, and there I purchased egg biscuit by the flour-bagful, raisins, citron, dried currants, and animal crackers—and more citron! I have never eaten citron from that day to this, because— But I am running ahead of my narrative.

"My!" said Henry Davis. "Your mother must be goin' to give a party, Paulie."

"Y-yes," said I. "How much is all them?"

"Dollar an' eighty-five cents," said Henry.

"Bring the book?"

"N-no," I said; "I-I'll pay fer them." I counted out the necessary amount, and departed from the store.

I had begun to notice one peculiar thing by this time. My following was growing less and less with each store I visited. Seven or eight of my friends had deserted me on coming out of the drugstore, running away

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